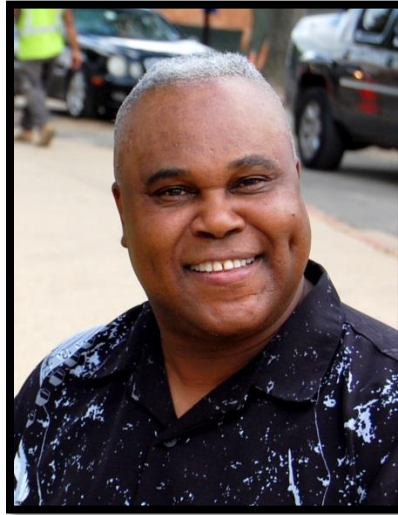


Chester Chandler, U.S. Navy Veteran, 1973 – 1985



A United States Navy Veteran and world-renowned blues artist, Chester Chandler, better known as Memphis Gold, is a man who has defied all odds.

Born in Memphis, Tennessee in 1955 as one of fourteen children, Chandler is no stranger to hard work. Influenced by his father who was also a musician, young Chandler was singing and playing the guitar at the age of 4. By the age of 8, he was dancing and playing on Beale Street for pocket change.

Enlisting in 1973, Chandler admits that his driving force for joining the military was the Vietnam War. “I wanted to make a difference, and I wanted to be a SAILOR!” he shares with excitement. Seeing the USS Barry (DD-933), the very ship he was stationed on, stationed here at Navy Yard, is a constant reminder of his service to this country.

After serving for over a decade, he is thankful for the opportunities and values instilled in him. “It’s something every young man should experience,” he says.

After coming to Washington, DC in 1992, Chandler found himself homeless. It was his love for music that would soon be his saving grace. While living on the streets of DC, he saw a beautiful guitar in a pawn shop window. He began trimming hedges and doing odd jobs to buy the \$600 instrument. Little did he know that this purchase would help transform him from a homeless Veteran into an internationally known blues singer and musician.

While playing in a local DC jazz and blues club, a representative of Armed Forces Entertainment discovered Chandler and put him on the road to entertain the troops. Since then, he has played in 36 countries, graced the covers of music magazines around the world and shared the stage with music legends like Sly Stone, Bernard Allison and James Brown.

In 2008, Chandler suffered another setback after a near fatal work accident where he broke his back in three places. Doctors believed he would never walk again, but Chandler wasn’t giving up that easily. Through faith, sheer determination, and rigorous rehabilitative help from the Washington DC VA Medical Center, he has regained his mobility.

Chandler leaves with a word of encouragement for young African Americans who may find that they are struggling, just like he did. He says, “We are naturally strong. We are the ultimate of strong. But we have to get back to believing in ourselves.”